

Bulletin for Interest Groups



Group Co-ordinator

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Learn
Laugh
Live

Message from the Chairman

I hope you are all further on with your Christmas preparations than I am: I've still got presents to wrap, cards to send and haven't even thought about the food – sigh! However, I have managed to get to some of my u3a activities, which have definitely put me in the Christmas mood, although it always seems peculiar to say "See you next year!" as you leave.

Our new year will see changes to Orpington u3a: some long-standing members of the Committee are standing down and we urgently need replacements to be able to continue. At the AGM in January the new Committee will be elected, so please consider joining us; we are a friendly team who help one another. Without more people stepping forward we will no longer be able to run.

Our monthly meetings will be held on a new day and time slot from January. They will be held at Crofton Halls on the third TUESDAY of the month, doors opening at 3.30 pm. We appreciate that this is not an ideal time for some, but hope that many of you will continue to support us by coming along to our interesting and varied talks.

The Committee and I wish you a very Happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you next year!

Chairman

Janet

We are very sorry to report the death of Janet, one of the Editorial team since 2009. She helped to develop the bi-monthly newsletter from a single black and white sheet to the colourful publication it is today.

But that was not her only contribution to Orpington u3a; Janet was also an enthusiastic member of several groups. She enjoyed Rummikub and Walks, and at one time she was leader of the Cinema group.

Her cheerful personality and helpfulness was evident at General Meetings and she will be greatly missed.

Our sincere condolences to her family.

Crofton Halls

Doors open
at 3.30pm for
refreshments
until the main
meeting starts
at 4.00pm

**PLEASE
NOTE THE
NEW DAY
(3rd Tuesday)
AND TIME
(3.30-5.30pm)**



General Meetings 3.30 - 5.30pm

CHANGE OF DAY AND TIME

Due to the renovation work at the Walnuts our usual time on Mondays for the General Meeting has been given to one of the MyTime groups.

After intense negotiation, our Chairman has secured us a slot on the THIRD TUESDAY of the month from 3.30 to 5.30pm starting with the AGM on 21 January 2025.

We are sorry for the disruption and inconvenience this will cause but all other avenues have been explored and we must make the best of the situation until normal service can be resumed.

In addition, some groups that have used the Crofton Halls for meetings will be changing their meeting venue.

Please look out for notices in the Newsletter and Bulletin, and check with your Group Leader.

Tuesday 21 January - Annual General Meeting followed by Rain Forests - David Jones

David works at the Natural History Museum and lectures at Imperial College. He is an entomologist specialising in rainforest insects and soil ecology. He has done fieldwork in 18 countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Gabon, Madagascar and French Guiana. He also did stand-up comedy for 5 years, which is reflected in his talks.

Monthly u3a Coffee Mornings - NOTE CHANGE!

As a consequence of moving the General Meetings to Tuesdays in 2025, the day for the Coffee Mornings will be changing to the **third Thursday** of the month.

The first coffee morning of 2025 will be (the week before the AGM) on Thursday 16 January at 10:30am in the BR6 Café (Orpington College). Members are invited to join other members over a cup of coffee or tea and a pastry for £3.50

Group Co-ordinator's Annual Report

This has been a very busy year for Orpington u3a groups. We have had many new start ups bringing our total number of groups to well over 100 to meet the wishes of our ever increasing membership.

Anne has been very industrious sorting out the technical side of group coordinating and also Ann has been busy welcoming new members and giving them information about various groups by organising New Member meetings to show them how to get the best out of their membership.

Neil is New Groups Liaison and creates fresh ideas for new groups to start.

It's vital to have new blood to make us vibrant and energised, I would like to thank Anne, Ann and Neil for their hard work and look forward to seeing even more exciting and interesting new groups in 2025.

I am retiring from the Committee after about 15 years and will be handing over the Group Coordinator role to Neil who has volunteered to take over this role.

Group Co-ordinator

New Members' Meetings - Orpington Methodist Church

The next New Members' event will be held on **Thursday January 23rd 2025 starting at 10.30am**. As a result of changes at Crofton Halls the venue for these meetings will now be at Orpington Methodist Church on Sevenoaks Road in the Wesley meeting room for next year.



The church is well served by public transport – buses 358 and R11 stop outside and it is only a short walk from other bus routes. On street parking is available on the road adjoining the church premises or at the nearby Tesco store (parking free for up to 3 hours).

In addition as I am aware there were a number of new members who were unable to make the last event on November 7th, you would be very welcome to come to this next one.

If you do decide to come along please let me know as it is useful to know who will be there. I would also like to say thank you to all those members who have joined this year and who I have had the pleasure of meeting. The reasons for you joining are varied but you bring with you your experience, skills and interest which enhances and ensures the continued success of Orpington u3a.

Here's to another good year in 2025!

New Members Liaison

New Groups

Award Winning Books

A new book group that will meet monthly at members' houses with a view to reading and discussing a wide variety of books that have either won or been shortlisted for a literary award, for example: Booker, Golden Dagger, Pulitzer, Hugo/Nebula, Costa.

Art for Fun

Elaine is hoping to start an "Art for Fun" group. It will meet at Christ Church hall on a Wednesday, exact frequency and time to be decided when hall availability is known.

Sports Events

A new open group that will arrange tickets and visits to local and possibly national sporting events including, for example: club rugby lower league and non-league football, county cricket, motor sports, tennis, hockey, horse racing, darts etc. Events will be proposed by the group leader and members.

The Royal College Music Lovers

The Royal College of Music is one of the world's great conservatoires, voted Number 1 recently, training gifted musicians from all over the world for international careers as performers, conductors and composers.

Opened in 1883 by the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), the RCM has trained some of the most important figures in British and international music life, including composers such as Holst, Vaughan Williams, Turnage and Britten; conductors such as Leopold Stokowski, Sir Colin Davis and Sir Roger Norrington; singers such as Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen and Alfie Boe; instrumentalists such as Sir James Galway, John Lill, Gervase de Peyer, and Natalie Clein.

With more than 900 students from more than 50 countries studying at undergraduate, masters or doctoral level, the RCM is a vibrant community of talented and open-minded musicians. RCM professors are musicians with worldwide reputations, accustomed to working with the most talented students of each generation to unlock their artistic potential.

I have been a Friend of the Royal College of Music for some years. Having spoken with the College, and with their agreement, I would like to lead a new Orpington u3a group entitled: "The Royal College Music Lovers."

Following an initial meeting perhaps at the Crofton Halls, I would offer to co-ordinate concert visits, one per month, for members of the new group. I am able to obtain tickets for most concerts, which are of an outstanding quality, either free of charge or within the price range £5 – £10. Our members will be able to enjoy outstanding music at a very reasonable price. I could reserve tickets, which members could then pay for and collect at the box office when they arrive.

The College is situated in Prince Consort Road, directly opposite the main entrance to the Royal Albert Hall. Members travelling up to London Victoria, can then take the No 52 bus directly to the main Royal Albert Hall. This could be a really friendly and enjoyable group, and we would aim to launch the new group from January 2025. There is also a brand new museum, with a host of valuable instruments, worth looking at, and a new cafeteria offering a wide selection of teas/coffees and snacks.

Interested in classical music? Then sign up to this new u3a group, you won't be disappointed!



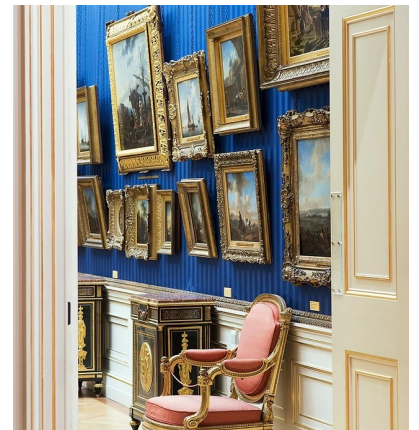
London Explorers

Wednesday 22nd January at 12:00 noon

The Wallace Collection – Private Tour

LAST FEW TICKETS AVAILABLE

The ever-popular London Explorers Group have arranged a private tour of the Wallace Collection which is situated in Manchester Square off Oxford St. The Wallace collection houses an incredible selection of world class paintings, sculptures, furniture and other treasures and our guided tour will be by one of the museum's lecturers who will introduce us to some of the highlights of the collection.



We will meet at **Petts Wood Station** to get the **10:12 train** then a bus to Oxford Street and a short walk to the museum. The cost is **£12.50** per person by cash or cheque.



Thursday 20th February – The Bank of England and the Temple of Mithras

Can the tooth fairy go cashless? Are cryptoassets money? Who decides how we pay? Money and the way we use it has changed in recent decades. With digital and contactless payments on the rise, the choices we make, as individuals and businesses are having an impact. Future-proofing the economy to meet our needs, now and in the future, is the job of the Bank of England. From digital currencies to the importance of cash in our everyday lives, from sustainability to making sure we have choice and access to different ways to pay, this exhibition responds to questions you have been asking. So, where are we now, and what is the future of money?

See and experience the reconstructed remains of the Temple of Mithras at the Bloomberg building. The temple has been restored to capture the mystery and intrigue of the Roman cult of Mithras, who used to meet on this site. Haze, light and the sound of footsteps, chanting and secret whispers will transport you back to London AD 240. Excavations undertaken between 2012 and 2014 were some of the most extensive ever to have taken place in London, and revealed new evidence of the area's Roman origins. Thousands of artefacts were discovered, sherds of Roman pottery and tonnes of animal bone, providing evidence of trade, consumption, food and industry.

This promises to be a fascinating day out, so put the date in your diary!

Walks



Walks are on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, starting at 10am unless stated otherwise.

PROGRAMME FOR THE COMING MONTHS

Wednesday 15th January – Knockholt

This is a 3.5 mile circular walk via country paths and quiet lanes on the North Downs, via the Chevening Estate. The paths will be muddy, the route is hilly and there are a few stiles so this one is not for the faint hearted and walking boots are a must.

Meet in the car park of the Three Horseshoes, Knockholt, for a **prompt 10:15 start**. The R5 and R10 buses stop at Knockholt Pound but are infrequent.

Wednesday 19th February – Cudham

This is a 3.5 mile circular walk on country paths, taking in New Years Wood and some hills. It can be muddy after rain. Walking boots are advised.

Meet at Cudham Recreation ground by the Blacksmiths Arms, Cudham Lane South. There's car parking at the rec and it is on a bus route. Refreshments & toilets are available afterwards at The Blacksmith's Arms.

All walkers join the walks at their own risk.

New walkers are welcome to join any of the walks but please telephone or email before coming on your first walk.

Please ensure that you wear suitable footwear for the walks.

Note that the walk description is only a brief guide, not a complete breakdown of the walk.



Please Share Your News

If you have organised an event for your group, or have a future outing or meeting to advertise we would love to hear about it – particularly if you don't usually write to us.

Please share your news with other members by sending a short note to the editors and we'll publish it in the next Newsletter or Bulletin.

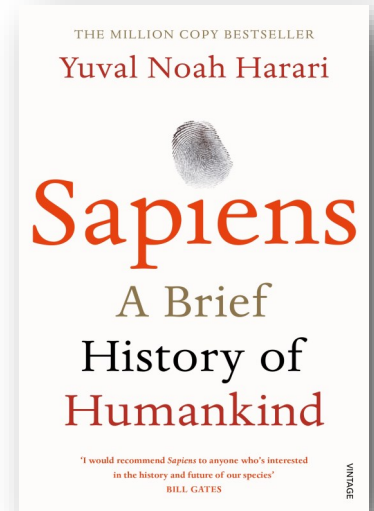
Thank you

Philosophy

Yuval Harari's critique of Happiness

Israeli-born Yuval Noah Harari is a renowned philosopher and public intellectual, known for his books on humanity's journey from ancient times to the present. His works include *Sapiens*, *Homo Deus*, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* and *Nexus*. Harari explores human states of free will, consciousness, intelligence, suffering and happiness. He examines the nature of happiness, both individually and across societies, concluding with several key points:

- Revolutions, economic growth, and political ideologies haven't led to greater happiness.
- Technological and industrial advances have improved convenience but not happiness.
- Happiness is shaped by subjective expectations and the search for meaning, not wealth, health, or politics where policy to improve happiness has failed.
- Happiness depends on aligning expectations with reality and is rooted in biochemistry, governed by hormones like serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin. The "hedonic treadmill" explains why societal progress doesn't result in lasting happiness.
- Love, family and community are more important than material comforts.
- Biotechnology and AI pose potential serious threats to happiness.



Social media hampers genuine happiness by replacing essential face-to-face interactions and distorting perceptions. Real danger lies in its use as a tool to manipulate psychological vulnerabilities, spread misinformation, and increase societal polarisation and comparisons leading to societal unrest.

Harari believes that individual happiness lies in aligning desires with reality, nurturing meaningful connections, and cultivating inner peace. Though an atheist, Harari advocates mindfulness and meditation as pathways to happiness. He reminds us:

"Mental clarity and self-awareness are far more crucial than consumerism or technological advancements"

Other topics that were covered in the Philosophy group meetings in 2024:

Betram Russell; Plasticity of the Human Brain; Philosophy before the Greeks in Ancient Mesopotamia; Survival of the Fittest; Thomas Young; Peter Singer; Mary Warnock; Charles Peirce; John Rawls.

We are currently putting together a programme for 2025.

"Questions you cannot answer are usually far better for you than answers you cannot question."

Science & Technology



In December we enjoyed a light-hearted Christmas quiz, mince pies, raffle and a 'show and tell' session.

At our meetings members often share recommendations for science related TV or radio programmes, books, exhibitions etc.

For something different over the festive period the recommendation for this month is

[The 2024 CHRISTMAS LECTURES](#)

Practising NHS doctor and leading science presenter Chris van Tulleken will delve deep inside our bodies to explore how the food we eat has a fundamental impact on our own health and that of our planet. This is to be broadcast on BBC Four on the 29, 30, and 31 December at 9pm, and on iPlayer from 29 December.



Industrial Heritage

An extra meeting has been scheduled for **Monday 6th January** at our usual time and venue: 2:30 – 4:30 in the Liberal Club hall (opposite Tesco). This will enable us to catch up on a couple of topics planned for our November meeting but postponed due to a technical problem.

The full programme for this meeting is:

- Some people are convinced that the Wright brothers *weren't* the first aviators to achieve sustained, controlled, powered flight in a heavier-than-air machine. See the evidence and decide for yourself!
- How some working people in the 19th century managed the division between leisure and work time, and what they got up to when they weren't working.
- Clogs, clog making and cloggers; and a number of things you probably never knew about walking (and dancing) on wooden soles.

And, on **Monday 27th January** we'll be holding our annual lunch. Details will be circulated to everyone on the Industrial Heritage mailing list at the beginning of January.

As an 'open' group, we welcome all Orpington u3a members to our meetings and other activities – as often, or not, as they like. For full information about what we are getting up to, ask the Group Leader to add your email address to our mailing list.

November Quiz



Approximately 100 members attended our recent Quiz Afternoon, which was both enjoyable and challenging.



Our excellent Quiz Master, the inestimable Brian, an Orpington u3a member, provided us with questions on a range of subjects to tax our memories.

Congratulations to Sybil and her team who won the prize.



Our thanks to Hilary and Pete for organising it and to Brian for his time and geniality. We hope to hold another Quiz next year.

Table Tennis Short Mat Bowls & Pickleball are moving!

Due to the refurbishment of Walnuts leisure centre, these activities will be relocating in the New Year.



[Pickleball | Orpington U3A](#) will be held Tuesdays 12–2pm at Bromley Lawn Tennis & Squash club, Sandford Road, Bromley, starting on 7th January.



[Table Tennis & Short Mat Bowls | Orpington U3A](#) will be held Fridays, 3 – 5 p.m. at Crofton Halls, Orpington, commencing 10th January (**No meeting on 3rd Jan**).



The cost of these activities will increase to £3 to £4 per week initially, but will hopefully reduce again once we are confident of numbers. New members are welcome.

Click on the links for further details and, if you are interested in joining us contact the Group Leader.

New Tram-Like Bus on Route 358 in Orpington

New "zero-emission" electric buses are now running on London's 358 route.

The vehicles, which look similar to trams but run on roads, are powered by pantograph technology which uses an arm-like structure attached to the bus roof.

This enables them to be charged at each end of the 15 mile (24km) route between Crystal Palace and Orpington in as little as six minutes, which means drivers do not need to return them to garages to recharge.

Full BBC News article: [New tram-like buses begin running from Crystal Palace to Orpington - BBC News](#)

These buses are fully electric, contributing to cleaner air along the route and helping London achieve its net-zero carbon target.

They also have advanced safety measures, including speed-limiting technology, audible warnings for pedestrians and improved driver visibility through cameras instead of mirrors.

The interior design includes improved seating, anti-slip flooring, USB charging ports, and palm-operated assistance buttons.

Short YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/Bk49uApOI10?si=vQstikhcXKxxWJJ>



Tech Tips

Recently we sent out an email with a link to the first edition of a new u3a [Tech Tips](#) newsletter. Our aim is to simplify the world of tech. We hope you found it useful.

In **Tech Tips** we will regularly share helpful suggestions and information related to smartphones, tablets, PCs and more.

Look out for **Tech Tips** in your inbox and discover how to get the most out of your devices.

If you have not been able to access the first edition or have any comments please send an email to the IT Manager.



*Deadlines
for the
next
Newsletter
and
Bulletin*

Deadlines for the next publications

Note: The day after the General Meeting

Newsletter 163 – 22nd January 2025

Bulletin 10 – 19th February 2025

Please send all articles to the
News Editor Team (both editors)



Click here for: [Recent Newsletters | Orpington U3A](#)



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IF YOU PRINT IT, PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE IT IN A PUBLIC PLACE
AND DISPOSE OF IT BY SHREDDING. THANK YOU**

JANUARY

u3a orpington

learn
laugh
live